

Message Text

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NOFORN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 226 - JANUARY 5, 1977

1. LEBANON. CHRISTIAN BEIRUT ON TUESDAY WAS PARALYZED BY A GENERAL STRIKE CALLED IN PROTEST AGAINST MONDAY'S BOMB EXPLOSION WHICH MAY HAVE KILLED AS MANY AS 50 PEOPLE. THE PHALANGIST PARTY RADIO WARNED THAT SUCH ACTS "COULD LEAD TO VARIOUS SIDES TAKING REVENGE" BUT DID NOT SAY WHO IT BLAMED FOR THE BLAST.

2. SARKIS AND THE ASF APPEAR TO BE LOSING CONTROL OVER THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT. EMBASSY BEIRUT COMMENTED THAT PHALANGISTS APPEAR TO BE ON THE VERGE OF GOING ON A RAMPAGE FOLLOWING THE BOMB EXPLOSION IN
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EAST BEIRUT ON JANUARY 3. CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS HAVE ALREADY ESTABLISHED A NUMBER OF ROADBLOCKS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN UNCONFIRMED RUMORS OF KIDNAPPINGS.

3. ADDING TO THE TENSION, SIX MOSLEM GUNMEN REPORTEDLY SPRAYED PEDESTRIANS IN EAST BEIRUT WITH MACHINEGUN FIRE

FROM A CAR YESTERDAY, KILLING FOUR AND WOUNDING SEVERAL OTHERS. IN THE WAKE OF SUCH INCIDENTS, IT IS INCREASINGLY LIKELY THAT UNCONTROLLED CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS WILL ATTEMPT TO RETALIATE, THUS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MOUNTING CYCLE OF SECTARIAN VIOLENCE, UNDERCUTTING SARKIS' AUTHORITY, AND, EVENTUALLY, OBLIGING THE SYRIAN FORCES TO INTERVENE.

4. EMBASSY BEIRUT HAS COMMENTED THAT A "NEW ERA" HAD BEGUN FOR LEBANON'S PRESS. A TEAM OF 20 CENSORS HAS BEEN QUICKLY ESTABLISHED AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE STATED THAT THOSE CENSORS WOULD KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING CONFESSIONAL PROBLEMS, ASF MOVEMENTS, PARTITION, AND MATTERS TENDING TO DISTURB RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES (READ: SYRIA). THE EMBASSY NOTED THAT L'ORIENT-LE JOUR RESUMED PUBLICATION ON JANUARY 4, AND AN-NAHAR IS EXPECTED TO DO SO IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

5. ARAB HEALTH MINISTERS HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE DOLLARS 50 MILLION IN AID TO LEBANON, ACCORDING TO THE KUWAIT PRESS. THESE FUNDS WILL NOT BE FUNNELED THROUGH THE RED CROSS BECAUSE OF ITS "BIASED" ROLE IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR. MEANWHILE, QATAR HAS APPROVED THE TRANSFER OF DOLLARS 3 MILLION TO LEBANON. THIS IS THE SECOND OF THREE PAYMENTS WHICH WILL TOTAL DOLLARS 9 MILLION. (SECRET/NOFORN)

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6. EGYPT. THE SEMI-OFFICIAL EGYPTIAN DAILY AL-AHRAM REPORTED YESTERDAY THAT SADAT HAD TOLD A VISITING PALESTINIAN GROUP THAT EGYPT CONSIDERS GAZA TO BE ITS RESPONSIBILITY UNTIL THE FORMATION OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. AS SUCH, VICE PRESIDENT MUBARAK HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL GAZA AFFAIRS AND DEVOTE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THEIR DOMESTIC NEEDS (HOUSING, EDUCATION , JOBS).

7. EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTED THAT EGYPTIAN EMPHASIS ON TIES TO GAZA WAS APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO CLARIFY CERTAIN NUANCES IN SADAT'S NEGOTIATING POSITION FOR HIS PLO CONSTITUENCY, FOLLOWING HIS STATEMENTS IN THE WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW, AND REASSURE THE PLO THAT HIS NEGOTIATING STANCE HAS NOT CHANGED. ON THE WEST BANK ITSELF, THE INTERVIEW SEEMS TO BE PROVING A LITMUS TEST OF THE POLITICAL LOYALTY OF WEST BANK LEADERS. THOSE WHO ARE PRO-JORDANIAN HAVE EXPRESSED PLEASANT SURPRISE, WHILE EXTREME NATIONALISTS ALLEGE THAT

INSIDIOUS DEALS ARE BEING HATCHED BY THE ARAB STATES AT PALESTINIAN EXPENSE. MAINSTREAM LEADERS HAVE GENERALLY RESPONDED CAUTIOUSLY BY REAFFIRMING THEIR SUPPORT FOR A PLO-LED INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE BUT WITHOUT RULING OUT EVENTUAL LINKS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES.

8. SADAT SEEMS DETERMINED ALSO TO ENHANCE EGYPT'S MILITARY POSITION IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN HIS HAND IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND WITHIN THE ARAB COMMUNITY. HE IS INCREASINGLY TURNING TO WESTERN EUROPE SO THAT THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY WILL NOT BE TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON THE SOVIET UNION. THE RECENT AGREEMENT WITH ROLLS ROYCE TO MAINTAIN EGYPT'S MIGS AND REPORTEDLY TO REPLACE PARTS FOR THE AIRCRAFT IS ONE ASPECT OF THIS POLICY.

9. ANOTHER ASPECT IS THAT THE EGYPTIANS APPARENTLY
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ARE IN THE PROCESS OF PURCHASING ADDITIONAL ARMS FROM FRANCE. DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER BOURGES ARRIVED YESTERDAY IN CAIRO TO DISCUSS FRENCH COOPERATION IN ESTABLISHING A SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS INDUSTRY. BOURGES IS QUOTED BY MENA AS SAYING THAT FRANCE IS PREPARED TO HELP CAIRO IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE, INCLUDING THE SALE OF THE MOST ADVANCED MIRAGES. SAUDI ROYAL ADVISOR KAMAL ADHAM IS ALSO IN CAIRO. (SECRET/NOFORN)

10. ISRAEL. ISRAELI POLITICIANS ARE REPORTED TO BELIEVE THAT THE SUICIDE OF HOUSING MINISTER AVRAHAM OFER IS LIKELY TO DAMAGE RABIN'S CHANCES FOR RE-ELECTION IN MAY. THERE IS SPECULATION IN SOME QUARTERS AT LEAST THAT THE INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS THAT OFER PROFITED ILLEGALLY FROM GOVERNMENT REAL ESTATE PURCHASES WILL CONTINUE. EMBASSY TEL AVIV OBSERVED THAT THE GROWING PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE GOVERNMENT SCANDAL, INCLUDING THE YADLIN TRIAL, IS BECOMING A SOURCE OF ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT TO RABIN AND THE LABOR PARTY, PARTICULARLY SINCE OFER HAD BEEN CLOSE TO THE LATE PINHAS SAPIR AND THE INNER LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY. (CONFIDENTIAL)

11. PALESTINIANS. THE SYRIAN NEWS AGENCY QUOTED PNC CHAIRMAN FAHUM YESTERDAY AS SAYING THAT THE PALESTINIAN CENTRAL COUNCIL WOULD CONVENE AGAIN IN DAMASCUS ON JANUARY 11 TO DISCUSS "NEW DEVELOPMENTS ACTING ON THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, AND CREATION OF PALESTINIAN UNITY." FAHUM ALSO NOTED THAT THE PCC WOULD CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE PNC. (UNCLASSIFIED)

12. TERRORISM. MAHMOUD SALEB, A PALESTINIAN MILITANT
AND MEMBER OF THE REJECTION FRONT, WAS SHOT AND
KILLED ON MONDAY NIGHT OUTSIDE HIS BOOKSTORE IN PARIS.
YESTERDAY, A PLO SPOKESMAN ACCUSED "ZIONIST AGENTS"
OF CARRYING OUT THE ASSASSINATION. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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